

## 18 *Stormy Passage*

As I spoke, I had a strange feeling I was repeating each sentence and I found my address colorless in comparison with that of the representative of the Social Revolutionaries who had spoken before me. Just as I was finishing, the chairman passed me a note from the crowd: "Worker Peter wants to address the meeting." The chairman was not sure whether he should let an outsider speak in a student meeting, but I promptly dispelled his doubts. "An outsider cannot vote but may greet the meeting as a guest."

"Worker Peter," a handsome young man in high boots, with a strong, high-pitched voice, delivered a passionate appeal for a brotherly union of students and workers. His speech strongly supported the S-D position, and the S-R had no time to get a bearded peasant to support theirs! The dispute continued, with odds in favor of S-D. When I moved the resolution, it was accepted by an overwhelming majority. The strike was declared ended and the University reopened, in the interest of the revolution.

In the new autonomous status of the University, the students were called on to take a stand on such matters as program requirements, examinations, coeducation, self-government, new courses in social and political sciences. A Council of Students was elected, and the party nominated me as its official representative in the Council.

Suddenly, and to our surprise, the University became the center of workers' gatherings. News of the ending of the academic strike in the interests of the revolution had penetrated into factory precincts. Throngs of workers found their way to the University to see and hear what was going on. They were disappointed to find students discussing academic problems, and to satisfy them it was decided to hold meetings in the University twice a day: in the morning, on academic issues; in the evening, on political questions. As the representative of the party, I was to organize the evening meetings.

My plan to arrange systematic lectures on the history of the labor movement proved unworkable because of the shortage of competent lecturers. The first evening, when the main hall was packed by workers, we had neither agenda nor speakers. I began with a few words of welcome, suggested that we discuss the current political situation, and turned the meeting over to the floor. The ensuing discussion was utterly chaotic. Some of the volunteer speakers were wholly inarticulate. The next day we arranged to have a dozen speakers from various leftist organizations on whom we called intermittently with the volunteers from the floor.

Within a few days the main hall could not hold the crowd. We opened all the large classrooms for supplementary gatherings and rotated the speakers. I had to speak five or six times each evening. Very soon I noticed that what brought workers to the University was